

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-20 are pending.

Initially, applicant wishes to thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 3-6, 9, 10, 13, 16 and 19 recite allowable subject matter. Accordingly, claim 3 is rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of base claim 1 so that claim 3, and claims 4 and 5 which depend cognately therefrom, should now be in condition for allowance. Claim 9 is rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of intervening claim 7 and base claim 1 so that claim 9, and claim 10 which depends therefrom, should now be in condition for allowance. Claim 13 is rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of base claim 12 so that claim 13 should now be in condition for allowance. Claim 16 is rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of intervening claim 15 and base claim 12 so that claim 16 should now be in condition for allowance. Claim 19 is rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of base claim 12 so that claim 19 should now be in condition for allowance.

Claims 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,846,009 to Kuroe et al. Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Kuroe et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,501,489 to Folsom et al.

The rejections, as they may apply to the claims presented herein, are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is directed to an airbag device for a vehicle having a handlebar. The airbag is deployed in an area generally adjacent the handlebar. Amended claim 1 calls for an inflator that supplies inflation gas to the airbag. A retainer for the airbag and inflator is provided with at least one of the airbag and the retainer being secured to the handlebar. Claim 1, as amended, further requires the retainer for the airbag and the inflator be entirely external relative to the handlebar. Kuroe et al. fail to disclose or suggest a retainer that is entirely external relative to a handle bar, as recited in amended claim 1.

More particularly, Kuroe et al. disclose two embodiments in FIGS. 1-6 and FIGS. 7-9, respectively. Each embodiment has a rotatable pipe stem, 16 and 116, respectively. Referencing the second embodiment, the Action asserts at least one of airbag 120 and

retainer 121 are secured to the handlebar. Since these components are mounted in the pipe stem 116, the pipe stem must be being construed as part of the handlebar. In the first embodiment, an inflator 21 for airbag 20 is disposed in the pipe stem 16 with the airbag 20 extending along the steering handles 8. Accordingly, this embodiment lacks a retainer for the airbag and the inflator that is entirely external relative to the handlebar. In the second embodiment, Kuroe et al. show an airbag module 120 that includes cylindrical housing 121 in which the airbag 122 is stored with the airbag module 120, and an inflator 123 both disposed in the pipe stem 116. As can be seen in FIG. 7, only the lid portion 121b of the airbag housing projects out of the pipe stem. Accordingly, the second embodiment lacks a retainer for the airbag and the inflator that is entirely external relative to the handlebar, as recited in claim 1. Accordingly, it is believed claim 1, and claims 2, 7, 8, and 11 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over Kuroe et al.

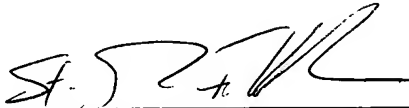
Claim 12 is directed to a vehicle restraint system including a handlebar and an airbag assembly. As amended, claim 12 calls for the handlebar to have a substantially hollow, tubular configuration and the airbag assembly to include an airbag, an inflator, and a retainer. Claim 12 further recites the airbag assembly being externally mounted to the hollow handlebar so that the airbag assembly is entirely outside the hollow handlebar. Kuroe et al. fail to disclose or suggest an airbag assembly that includes an airbag, an inflator, and a retainer for the airbag and inflator that is externally mounted to a substantially hollow handlebar to be entirely outside thereof, as required in amended claim 12.

As previously discussed, both embodiments of Kuroe et al. include components of a corresponding airbag assembly disposed in a pipe stem. In the first embodiment, the inflator 21 is in the pipe stem 16, while in the second embodiment both the inflator 123, and the airbag 122 and its housing 121 are disposed in the pipe stem 116. Thus, Kuroe et al. fail to teach an airbag assembly including an airbag, an inflator and a retainer that is externally mounted to the hollow handlebar so that the entire assembly is entirely outside the hollow handlebar, as required in amended claim 12. Accordingly, claim 12, and claims 14, 15, 17, 18, and 21 which depend cognately therefrom, are believed allowable over Kuroe et al.

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In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-20 are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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